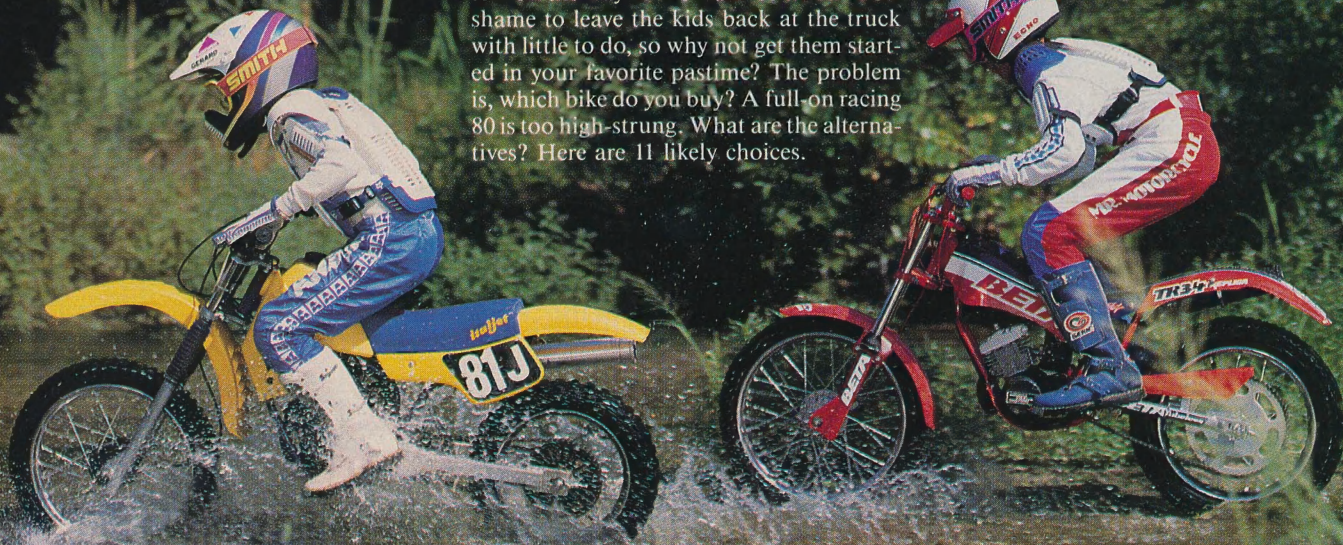


FUN FOR THE KIDS

What to look for when buying a minibike

By the DIRT BIKE Staff

Baby-boomers out there are now in the vet class, and many have youngsters in tow on the way to the track or trails. It's a shame to leave the kids back at the truck with little to do, so why not get them started in your favorite pastime? The problem is, which bike do you buy? A full-on racing 80 is too high-strung. What are the alternatives? Here are 11 likely choices.



BETA MINI TRIAL

Engine type Air-cooled, piston-port 2-stroke
Displacement 49cc
Bore and stroke 40mm x 38mm
Carburetion 14mm Dellorto
Fuel tank capacity 0.5 gal.
Transmission 1-speed
Clutch Automatic
Gearing, front/rear 14/37
Front travel 4 in.
Rear travel 3.5 in.
Seat height 23 in.
Ground clearance 9.75 in.
Wheelbase 39 in.
Weight 62 lbs.
Spark arrester Yes
Suggested retail price \$945

Comments: This Tarres Replica TR34 is directed towards kids in the seven- to 11-year-old group who want to develop trials skills. Its wetsuit-thickness foam seat, stump-puller gearing and steep steering head angle make it unsuitable for casual trail riding. Ample torque and excellent trials tires, along with springy suspension, are great for helping bigger kids develop balancing skills, but the Beta is too specialized for use as anything else.

ITALJET BUSTER

Engine type Air-cooled, piston-port 2-stroke
Displacement 49.9cc
Bore and stroke 40mm x 39mm
Carburetion 14mm Dellorto
Fuel tank capacity 0.5 gal.
Transmission 1-speed
Clutch Automatic
Gearing, front/rear 11/49
Front travel 2.9 in.
Rear travel 3.6 in.
Seat height 22.5 in.
Ground clearance 5.9 in.
Wheelbase 32.8 in.
Weight 66 lbs.
Spark arrester No
Suggested retail price \$899

Comments: One of two beginner Italjets, the Buster is the shorter version for smaller youths, aged four to eight. The lower seat height and smaller, wider tires (2.50x12 and 2.50x10) make it a better choice than the Victory for smaller, less skilled riders. Its downsized proportions are still larger than the Y-Zinger and Suzuki JR, though. Both drum brakes are hand-operated, and the Buster has maintenance-free mag-styled wheels. The Buster is AMA-legal for the PeeWee class but needs a spark arrester for off-road use.

ITALJET VICTORY

Engine type Air-cooled, piston-port 2-stroke
Displacement 49.9cc
Bore and stroke 40mm x 39mm
Carburetion 14mm Dellorto
Fuel tank capacity 0.5 gal.
Transmission 1-speed
Clutch Automatic
Gearing, front/rear 11/49
Front travel 2.9 in.
Rear travel 4.5 in.
Seat height 26 in.
Ground clearance 8.4 in.
Wheelbase 40.5 in.
Weight 79 lbs.
Spark arrester No
Suggested retail price \$999

Comments: Though it shares the Franco Morini motor of the Buster, the Italjet Victory is aimed at larger riders and has larger wheels (15-inch and 12-inch) that make it illegal for the PeeWee class and stretch seat height to 26 inches. It would have to be raced in the 65cc class, for which the AMA has set an age range of seven to 11. The Victory has a full-on cradle frame and good suspension but falls short of the six-speed KX60 on the track.

HONDA EZ90 CUB

Engine type Air-cooled, reed-valved
2-stroke
Displacement 89.8cc
Bore and stroke 48mm × 49.6mm
Carburetion 15mm Keihin
Fuel tank capacity 1.1 gal.
Transmission 1-speed automatic
Clutch Automatic
Gearing, front/rear 14/35
Front travel 3.9 in.
Rear travel 4.3 in.
Seat height 29.5 in.
Ground clearance 8.3 in.
Wheelbase 47.2 in.
Weight 176 lbs.
Spark arrester Yes
Suggested retail price \$1498

Comments: The 1991 Cub EZ90 offers space-age styling and twist-it-and-go ease of riding but it's a bear to work on, other than chain adjustment. Luckily, we tried to break it and couldn't, so maintenance is minimal. The EZ has electric starting and a manual kickstarter tucked away in case the battery goes dead. The bike is the easiest to ride of all the 50cc-90cc bikes, but it has the tallest seat height, making it more of a big kid/small adult learner machine. As a safety feature, the Cub won't start unless the kickstand is up and rear brake fully engaged.

YAMAHA PW50

Engine type Air-cooled, piston-port
2-stroke
Displacement 49cc
Bore and stroke 40mm × 39.2mm
Carburetion 12mm Mikuni
Fuel tank capacity 0.5 gal.
Transmission 1-speed
Clutch Automatic
Gearing, front/rear Shaft
Front travel 2.4 in.
Rear travel 2 in.
Seat height 19.1 in.
Ground clearance 4.1 in.
Wheelbase 33.7 in.
Weight 82 lbs.
Spark arrester Yes
Suggested retail price \$799

Comments: The least expensive Pee-Wee, the PW50 is a highly-sought-after machine and is more competitive than the JR50. It is faster, stock, than the JR and has more hop-up potential. The PW also has oil injection and a restrictor in the exhaust, but the shaft means you can't alter gearing cheaply. Oddly enough, the motor pivots in the frame. The pipe is quiet and tucked in very well. Like the Buster, the PW50 has mag-styled wheels; only the Yamaha's are steel. It's meant for kids aged four to eight.



▲ Honda EZ90 Cub

Yamaha PW50 ▼





Honda XR80R

Suzuki JR50



Yamaha BW80

Suzuki DS80



HONDA XR80R

Engine type Air-cooled, SOHC, two-valve 4-stroke
Displacement 80cc
Bore and stroke 47.5mm x 45mm
Carburetion 20mm Keihin
Fuel tank capacity 1.7 gal.
Transmission 5-speed manual
Clutch Manual
Gearing, front/rear 14/46
Front travel 5.5 in.
Rear travel 4.3 in.
Seat height 28.5 in.
Ground clearance 8.3 in.
Wheelbase 47 in.
Weight 141 lbs.
Spark arrester Yes
Suggested retail price \$1398

Comments: Aimed at beginners aged eight and above, the XR is the only sub-100cc four-stroke available. Its relatively tall seat height and manual clutch and tranny make it a bit harder to learn on than the BW80 or Cub, but it offers better performance once the fundamentals are mastered. It also makes a great pit bike. We put 180-pound Jim Holley (the XR is rated at a 220-pound maximum) on ours to see if he could break it, and he couldn't, so you know the bike will last forever under normal conditions.

YAMAHA BW80

Engine type Air-cooled, piston-port 2-stroke
Displacement 79cc
Bore and stroke 47mm x 45.6mm
Carburetion 15mm Mikuni
Fuel tank capacity 1.1 gal.
Transmission 3-speed manual
Clutch Automatic
Gearing, front/rear 15/32
Front travel 4.4 in.
Rear travel 4.4 in.
Seat height 24.8 in.
Ground clearance 7.1 in.
Wheelbase 42.9 in.
Weight 146 lbs.
Spark arrester Yes
Suggested retail price \$1099

Comments: Yamaha's BW80 offers an exhaust restrictor plate for beginning riders, plus its fat tires offer excellent stability in sand. If your most-frequented ride spot is sand, it's a good choice for beginners; however, the ATV-type tires don't offer precise turning like normal motorcycle tires on harder terrain. Its three-speed tranny gives the learner experience in shifting, and the auto clutch doesn't intimidate neophytes. It's a great pit bike, too.

SUZUKI DS80

Engine type Air-cooled, reed-valved 2-stroke
Displacement 79cc
Bore and stroke 49mm x 42mm
Carburetion 20mm Mikuni
Fuel tank capacity 1.2 gal.
Transmission 5-speed manual
Clutch Manual
Gearing, front/rear 12/34
Front travel 3.9 in.
Rear travel 4.3 in.
Seat height 25.6 in.
Ground clearance 7.7 in.
Wheelbase 41.7 in.
Weight 128 lbs.
Spark arrester Yes
Suggested retail price \$1299

Comments: Suzuki's entry-level trail machine, the DS80, is recommended for riders under 110 pounds, and its seat height makes it a handful for children under nine or ten. Like the XR80, its fully manual transmission and clutch is harder to master for beginners than the automatic machines, but it will be outgrown later than the autos. The DS offers full lighting and oil-injection and is 13 pounds lighter than the XR80.



Yamaha DTL/C 50



Kawasaki KX60

SUZUKI JR50

Engine type Air-cooled, piston-port 2-stroke
Displacement 49cc
Bore and stroke 41mm × 37.8mm
Carburetion 12mm Mikuni
Fuel tank capacity 0.5 gal.
Transmission 1-speed w/neutral
Clutch Automatic
Gearing, front/rear 13/28
Front travel 2-way adjustable
Rear travel 2-way adjustable
Seat height 18.9 in.-20.7 in.
Ground clearance 4.5 in.-6.3 in.
Wheelbase 33.9 in.
Weight 82 lbs.
Spark arrester Yes
Suggested retail price \$829

Comments: Smallest of the Pee-Wee-class bikes, the JR50 has height adjustment features the others don't. Extra shock mounts on the swingarm allow rear height increases, and removable spacers in the forks do the same up front. Also, seat height can be raised with different mounting holes. The JR has neutral, a restrictor plate in the exhaust, ten-inch wheels and oil injection. Depending on the size and agility of your youngster, he or she may be able to handle the JR as early as aged three, but the JR is the first outgrown.

YAMAHA DTL/C 50

Engine type . . Liquid-cooled, reed-valved 2-stroke
Displacement 49.3cc
Bore and stroke 40mm × 39.2mm
Carburetion 16mm Mikuni
Fuel tank capacity 2.25 gal.
Transmission 6-speed manual
Clutch Manual
Gearing, front/rear 13/48
Front travel 6.7 in.
Rear travel 5.9 in.
Seat height 30.9 in.
Ground clearance 10.4 in.
Wheelbase 48.6 in.
Weight 165 lbs.
Spark arrester Yes
Suggested retail price \$1449

Comments: This is a full-on street trail bike designed to give 15-year-olds (and above) a moped-class mount with real off-road capabilities. If your child is five feet tall or more, he'll be able to handle the DTL/C with little problem. Should this be the case, it can be stripped down for off-road-only use. It has oil-injection and a boost bottle, plus it has folding shifter and brake pedals to make get-offs less expensive.

KAWASAKI KX60

Engine type . . Liquid-cooled, reed-valved 2-stroke
Displacement 60cc
Bore and stroke 43mm × 41.6mm
Carburetion 24mm Mikuni
Fuel tank capacity 0.9 gal.
Transmission 6-speed manual
Clutch Manual
Gearing, front/rear 13/44
Front travel 7.9 in.
Rear travel 7.9 in.
Seat height 27.9 in.
Ground clearance 9.8 in.
Wheelbase 42.5 in.
Weight 111.4 lbs.
Spark arrester No
Suggested retail price \$1599

Comments: This is a full-on mini racer scaled down for bigger kids, aged seven to 11. It has almost every feature of the bigger KXs, except for KIPS valves and fully adjustable suspension. The KX60 is more of a beginning racer's bike than a beginning rider's mount, as the pipey power and manual tranny and clutch can intimidate those just starting riding. If your youngster is a quick learner and has good coordination, this would be a good choice for a first bike, as it is the last outgrown and the rage of the 65cc class. □